

A time to reflect

Following the tragic events which led to the murder of PC Sharon Beshenivsky, David French, chief executive of the Police Dependants' Trust and a retired police officer, outlines the need for families to be aware of the charity and how they can offer a helping hand.

The events of Friday, November 18, startled even the most sombre of souls. As PC Sharon Beshenivsky went about her daily policing duties alongside her colleague, PC Teresa Milburn, no one could have foreseen the devastation that has followed.

Shock and disbelief jolted through the nerves of not only each and every police officer in the UK but indeed the very backbone of the country. In times like these, it is important that officers and their families are aware of the support services in existence.

Being familiar with police pension criteria and registering with charities, such as the Police Dependants' Trust (PDT), may not be the biggest concern when tragedy strikes, but services like ours can provide essential support.

One illustration of how the PDT can help is the case of Wendy Ezobi, whose partner died one

New Year's Day. After finishing work at 2am, he was killed in a car accident on his way home.

Tokundo Ezobi had been with Sussex Police just short of three years and was a bobby on the beat. He had just applied for SO19, the armed police in London when the tragic accident occurred.

Wendy, unmarried at the time, changed her name by deed pole so that both herself and her children would have Tokundo's name. At the age of 31, Wendy's life was drastically changed as she now copes with her 4 children by herself.

Every year, the PDT assesses Wendy's case and financially supports her accordingly. One example of the PDT's help is their childcare assistance. They paid for one day's worth of childcare per week so that Wendy could have a study day in order that she is able to achieve some success to provide for her family's future.

Fact box:

The Police Dependants' Trust (PDT) exists solely to support those who protect the public.

The Trust has been providing financial support to the families of officers killed or injured in the line of duty since 1966. The organisation is a registered charity (no. 251021) whose purpose is to assist in cases of need defined as the following:

- Dependants of current or former police officers who died from injuries received in the execution of duty;
- Police officers or former police officers incapacitated as a result of injury received in the execution of duty, and/or their dependants.

Since its inception, the PDT has been able to offer substantial help to over 5,000 families throughout the UK. In order to maintain and expand upon this work, the PDT needs the continued support of its benefactors as well as police officers to register with the Trust. It is vital that officers register so that the PDT are able to provide support to their family should the worst happen.

No one wants to think about worst case scenarios but recent events show just how quickly things can change and it really is best to ensure the future security of your family as much as you can.

The PDT relies on the generosity of police officers, patrons and the general public to continue its invaluable work. For information on how to donate, log onto www.policedependantstrust.org.uk or call 020 8941 6907.

